Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
Advanced Systems & Concepts
SUCCESS STORY

NASA Gives ACTD's Global Hawk UAVs New Jobs

Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations (ACTDs) keep on giving and the High Altitude Endurance (HAE) ACTD is another example.

NASA has received two Global Hawk UAVs from the HAE ACTD. The UAVs will be used for Earth science missions, to explore new applications for UAVs and develop more advanced ones.

An original ACTD UAV gets new duties

Begun in 1995, the HAE ACTD pursued a responsive unmanned aerial vehicle that could fly above enemy air defenses, dwell for long periods over areas and provide near, real-time intelligence. The result was Global Hawk, which can fly 30 hours and achieve altitudes up to 65,000 feet. It entered acquisition in 2001. Since then, these Air Force UAVs have been used in Iraq and Afghanistan, flying more than 22,000 hours. They have also gone beyond battlefield uses. In October 2007, Global Hawk provided images of Southern California fires.

Recently, NASA announced it had received two Air Force Global Hawks—the first and sixth built in the ACTD. They bring new capabilities for studying remote Earth locations, which other manned and unmanned platforms do not have. With dedicated satellite communications, researchers will be able to monitor instruments, evaluating data in real time.

NASA and others will also investigate new uses. "We are looking forward to working with our National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Department of Energy partners to explore the unique capabilities of the Global Hawk to augment the current satellite and aircraft- based observation systems NASA uses," NASA's Dr. Michael Freilich said. In addition, NASA believes Global Hawk can aid development of unmanned aircraft technologies. Global Hawk's science missions are expected in 2009.

For more information on the ACTD/JCTD program, visit: www.acq.osd.mil/jctd/ .